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ABSTRACT

This publication summarizes the programs administered by the National Educational Research and Development Centers, the Regional Educational Laboratories, and the Regional Technology in Education Consortium. It is designed to generate discussion about the direction and content of the national educational research agenda and to help plan educational priorities for the investment of resources over the next 15 years. Each of the three organization's background, service area, and priorities for the next 5 years are described. Research centers and programs affiliated with the organization are highlighted, specifically, their missions, specialty areas, and recent accomplishments. Contact information for each program and research center is provided. (LMI)

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Where Are We Going With Educational Research?

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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EA 027 447

Where Are We Going With Educational Research?

Abstracts of the

National Educational Research and Development Centers

Regional Educational Laboratories

and

Regional Technology in Education Consortia

U.S. Department of Education
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Secretary

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Assistant Secretary

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Director

March 1996

Office of Educational Research and Improvement

In 1994, Congress reauthorized and reorganized the research activities of the U.S. Department of Education. The Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994—a part of Public Law 103–227, the Educate America Act—authorized the educational research and dissemination activities of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).

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Introduction

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement's (OERI) authorizing legislation calls for the Assistant Secretary of Education for Educational Research and Improvement to work collaboratively with the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board to recommend priorities for the investment of resources over the next 15 years, including areas in which further research, development, and dissemination are needed.

We have already gone a long way to define the first phase of that plan by launching a 5-year program of research centers, regional laboratories, regional technology consortia, and ERIC Clearinghouses. We intend to draw upon the same extensive level of public comment and discussion to build the plan for the subsequent 10 years. We have undertaken an unprecedented outreach program, which is national in scope and unique in its commitment to reach beyond traditional definitions to a broader idea of educational research—an idea which includes every individual, regardless of age, gender, race, or creed, as the learner, and the world in which we live, beginning in the classroom and working outward, as the learning environment.

This publication provides a short summary of the National Educational Research and Development Centers, the Regional Educational Laboratories, and the Regional Technology in Education Consortia as a way of beginning a conversation with America on a most important question: What should our national educational research agenda be? A summary of the activities of the ERIC Clearinghouses can be found in *All About ERIC*, (ERIC 95-5033r)

OERI is aware that in order for any plan to be considered a national one, it must include the broadest possible public outreach and reflect the active participation of teachers and policymakers, the academic community, foundations and other sponsors of research, and public and private groups.

At its core, the document must provide not only a rationale for future federal government investments, but also guidance for the investments of others. The Research Priorities Plan will only be valuable if it

- responds to real needs, as articulated by the consumers of educational research: most notably the practitioner and policy community, and

- connects these needs with emerging "scientific opportunities" (powerful new ideas about how learning takes place and under what conditions).

Critical components of OERI's research mission are the network of specialized, federally supported regional educational laboratories and university-based research and development centers authorized under the 1994 law.

Located across the country and dedicated to research and dissemination in specific topic areas, these facilities provide valuable information and insights that are the core of our national educational research agenda for the next five years.

The 1994 law also carries with it a mandate—to design a national research agenda for education, looking 15 years into the future.

As we look 10—or even 15—years into the future, we need to be asking the larger questions, but we must not lose track of the basic concerns that are always with us, even in times of great change.

Anyone wishing to contribute to this Research Priorities Plan may share their thoughts and reactions with us:

Research Priorities Plan
MIS/OERI
U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C. 20208-5570

e-mail:
research_plan@inet.ed.gov

Thank you very much for your support and assistance.

National Educational Research and Development Centers

New National Educational Research and Development Centers

The National Educational Research and Development Center Program is administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). OERI funds research and development centers across the country to carry out sustained research and development initiatives that address nationally significant problems and issues in education. Center awards are made to eligible higher education agencies, institutions of higher education in consort with public or nonprofit organizations, or to interstate agencies established by special compacts.

All Research and Development Centers Will:

- Conduct a coherent, sustained program of research and development to address problems and issues of national significance, using a well-conceptualized and theoretically sound framework;
- Contribute to the development and advancement of theory;
- Conduct scientifically rigorous studies capable of generating findings that contribute substantially to understanding the field;
- Conduct work of sufficient size, scope, and duration to produce definitive guidance for improvement efforts and further research;
- Address issues of both equity and excellence in education for all students; and
- Document, report, and disseminate information about research findings and other accomplishments in ways that will facilitate effective use of that information in professional development for teachers, families, and community members, as appropriate.

Each of the new Centers will operate under one of seven individual priorities and will be monitored by one of the five National Research Institutes located within OERI. The work of the Centers is designed to complement ongoing activities of the Department of Education, other agencies, and institutions. Seven Centers have been funded for fiscal years 1996 through 2000. In addition, there are three already existing Centers that were funded prior to 1996.

Enhancing Young Children's Development and Learning

Early Childhood: National Center to Enhance Early Development and Learning, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, CB #4100, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-4100. (919) 966-4250. *Monitor:* The National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education

> The **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill** in collaboration with University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University of Virginia, and University of California at Los Angeles **($2,749,731 requested)**

The UNC consortium proposes research studies with a sound conceptual framework connecting all projects and links with other research sites, associations, and family groups.

There are three **Research Strands:**

> **Quality of Services**—Two studies, measuring long-term effects of child care and assisting communities to move toward quality child care, will build on the recent five-state study of the quality of child care in order to determine quality indicators and best practices. A study on the impact of quality services on infants and toddlers with disabilities will develop quality indicators in a review of 150 early intervention programs.
>
> **Kindergarten Transitions**—Two studies, a Longitudinal Kindergarten Transition Study and a Transitions Intervention Study, will complement the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development project that will follow 360 children from birth through 3rd grade to understand better what interventions help children move into elementary school and maintain gains made in preschool.
>
> **Ecological Interventions**—Three studies will help us understand what kind of interventions will work, for which children and families, and under what conditions.

A **Policy Strand** will focus on state policies that affect the quality of child care services.

A **Dissemination Strand** will include hypothetical case models for instructional purposes and translate research into practice.

Improving Student Learning and Achievement

Student Achievement: National Research and Development Center on Achievement in School Mathematics and Science, Wisconsin Center for Education Research, School of Education, University of Wisconsin—Madison, 1025 West Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706. (608) 263-3605. *Monitor:* The National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment

> The **University of Wisconsin—Madison** in collaboration with the Technical Educational Research Center (TERC), Vanderbilt University/Peabody College, University of Pittsburgh, University of Massachusetts—Dartmouth **($2.5 million requested)**

The consortium, led by Wisconsin, will establish a Center on Student Achievement in Math and Science.

Achievement in Math and Science

The Wisconsin consortium will implement validated principles for the design of classrooms that promote understanding in mathematics and science. The research projects at the core of the Center's activities will be organized around five thematic elements: (1) modeling; (2) arguments and standards of evidence; (3) big ideas and technologies; (4) equity; and (5) assessment. Studies will be carried out as part of design collaboratives in which researchers will work with teachers and schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, to design and implement "test beds" to support the development and validation of practices leading to higher levels of student achievement for all students.

The 27 research studies to be conducted by the Center are organized into 6 strands: (1) student understanding; (2) important ideas in mathematics and science; (3) professional development; 4. assessment; (5) organizational support; and (6) the relationship between school mathematics and science. Studies will be conducted at school sites throughout the United States.

Student Learning and Achievement in English

Student Achievement: National Research Center on Improving Student Learning and Achievement in English, The Research Foundation of State University of New York, University of Albany, SUNY, School of Education, 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222. (518) 442-5029. *Monitor:* The National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment

> The **University of Albany, SUNY** in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin—Madison, University of Washington, and University of Oklahoma **($2.5 million requested)**

The Center at SUNY Albany will specify those features of curriculum and instruction that are essential to success in English, including skills with oral and written language, literature, and other forms of communication. The Center's scope of efforts will include not only K–12 English instruction, but also other subjects where, increasingly, English skills are needed. The cross-disciplinary instruction between English and other academic subject areas (e.g., history, science, and mathematics—those that have been the focus of many recent proposals for reform) are at the heart of this proposed Center. The Center's work will be conducted in a variety of classroom settings with diverse populations of students at elementary and secondary schools in various sites, including urban areas. In its program of research, this Center will focus on pedagogical approaches that foster literate thinking and high literacy. A total of 18 studies will be conducted. Two examples are included.

The Study of Cross-Disciplinary Programs will:

> Examine cross-disciplinary programs involving English at a variety of sites around the country (Texas, California, Florida, and New York);
>
> Provide models of cross-disciplinary programs at middle and high school levels and evidence of the kinds of student achievement that occur for English and other subjects included in the cross-disciplinary courses; and
>
> Develop portfolio measures.

A National Assessment of High School English Teachers' Instructional Practices will:

> Assess the importance of a variety of discourse practices for student achievement and explore differences among students in access to high-quality discourse;
>
> Develop quality discourse practices for high school English teachers that will improve student achievement; and
>
> Develop policy recommendations for improving discourse in secondary classrooms.

Improving Student Assessment and Educational Accountability

Assessment: Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), University of California, Los Angeles, Graduate School of Education, 1339 Moore Hall, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024. (310) 206-1530. *Monitor:* The National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment

> The **University of California at Los Angeles** (UCLA) in collaboration with the University of Colorado at Boulder, Stanford University, LRDC, the University of Pittsburgh, The RAND Corporation, Educational Testing Service (ETS), Northwestern University, University of Michigan, University of California at Santa Barbara, University of Chicago, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and many research partners, including several states, additional school districts, research laboratories, and the New Standards Project **($2.8 million requested)**

The UCLA consortium will work with state and local partners to improve the utility and trustworthiness of educational information available to the public. The consortium will:

> Engage teachers, researchers, policymakers, and the public to improve assessment and its links to educational quality;
>
> Find ways to improve current assessment and instruction practices from the perspectives of parents, teachers, students, and policymakers;
>
> Develop tools, procedures, and systems to improve the quality of assessment as practiced in schools;
>
> Work with states and school districts, and their associations, that are engaged in reforming schools, teaching, and assessment practices;
>
> Find ways to improve the implementation of large scale assessment systems as they connect to classroom instruction, educational reform, and equity issues;
>
> Create and evaluate approaches and accommodations to allow more students to participate in large scale assessments, especially students with disabilities and limited language proficiency; and
>
> Work with states and school districts to develop and validate new models for assessing individual and group problem solving, with attention to equity and fairness for special populations and assist them in making trustworthy interpretations of this information.

Meeting the Educational Needs of a Diverse Student Population

Cultural Diversity: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, The Regents of the University of California, The University of California, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. (408) 459-4114. *Monitor:* The National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students

> The **University of California at Santa Cruz** in collaboration with the Center for Applied Linguistics; University of Colorado, Boulder; Brown University; George Mason University; University of Arizona; California State University at Long Beach; California State University at San Jose; University of Hawaii; ARC; Claremont Graduate School; RAND; TERC; Johns Hopkins University; University of Houston; University of Louisville; Western Washington University; California State University at San Diego; University of Memphis; University of Southern California **($3,998,991 requested)**

The Santa Cruz consortium will assist the nation's populations of diverse students, including those at risk of educational failure, to achieve high academic standards. The grantee will carry out 38 research projects in 7 program areas under a comprehensive, integrated framework of educational research and development.

Five central programs are proposed: **Language Learning; Professional Development; Families, Peers and Communities; Teaching and Learning in Context; and Integrated Reform.** Within the 5 central programs, the Center will address core issues and problems related to students from all major linguistic, cultural, and ethnic groups, including students facing four risk factors for educational failure—limited English proficiency, poverty, race, and geographic location.

Two overarching programs also will be pursued:

> The **Data Analysis and Archiving Program** will provide data useful to the research of each of the five central programs.
>
> The **Collaborations Program** will support partnerships and outreach to educators, policymakers and national organizations interested in school improvement and increased student achievement.

Santa Cruz is currently completing work on a previous 5-year OERI award to operate a National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.

Increasing the Effectiveness of State and Local Education Reform Efforts

Education Reform: National Research and Development Center on Increasing the Effectiveness of State and Local Education Reform Efforts, Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania, 3440 Market Street, Suite 560, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3325. (215) 573-0700, ext. 224. *Monitor:* The National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management

> The **University of Pennsylvania** in collaboration with Harvard University, Stanford University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison **($2.8 million requested)**

The Penn led Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) will conduct a coherent program of research on state and local education reform efforts. This research program will contribute to the theory and knowledge-base on improving student learning and instructional quality through reform and will foster a continuing dialogue between the producers and consumers of research.

CPRE sees effective reform as focusing on teaching and learning and creating a **coherence** of policy and practice around that focus; incorporating effective individual and organizational **incentives**; and building sufficient **capacity** at the individual and organizational levels.

The research is complemented by a dissemination program designed to meet the needs of the center's constituents—"reform communities" that include teachers, administrators, parents, business and community leaders, higher education faculty and officials interested in K-12 reform, local and state board of education members, reformers in nongovernmental organizations, governors, legislators, and chief state school officers; is integrated with other center activities; is continuous; and, relies on existing channels whenever possible.

The proposed program of research is organized into three program areas:

> **School Reform**—discover ways to mobilize capacity and accountability in a variety of schools around the improvement of instruction; deal with public schools that persistently fail to meet expectations for high quality instruction; and, "scale-up" effective practices in individual schools so that they reach large numbers of students.
>
> **Policy and Governance**—discover how and why state and local education reform policies are changing.
>
> **School Finance**—develop school finance structures that are appropriate for the today's education goals.

Improving Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary Education: National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, Stanford Institute for Higher Education Research, 508 Ceras Building, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-4125. (415) 723-7727. *Monitor:* The National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning

Stanford University in collaboration with the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Michigan **($2.5 million requested)**

Stanford's research and development agenda includes:

Postsecondary Organizational Improvement: Restructuring and Beyond—Develop theory relating environmental demands (in the economy and society) and postsecondary organizational adaptations. Evaluate emerging campus and state restructuring activities. Move beyond restructuring to customized institutional change.

Transitions in Education and Work—View transitions between education, work and further education as a lifelong process. Map the transitions and learn what facilitates them. Improve the match between education and employer demands.

Participation and Outcomes of Postsecondary Education—Examine different patterns of participation in postsecondary education and assess their employment and other outcomes. For example, is there an advantage to finishing college in 4 years without working, rather than in 6 or 7 years interspersed with work? Is it advantageous to attend only one college or university rather than several for a given degree?

Postsecondary Professional Development—Find ways to improve professional development and teaching for grades K-16, including attracting more talented college graduates to teaching. Apply lessons of contextual learning and accelerated schools to several areas, including remedial education in postsecondary institutions. Develop new methods of assessing teaching.

Student Learning and Institutional Assessment—Determine whether assessment and accreditation can improve learning for diverse populations in postsecondary institutions. Examine state and accreditation policies, intra-institutional assessments, and assessment from a faculty perspective.

Quality, Productivity, and Efficiency in Postsecondary Education—Examine the application of TQM concepts to postsecondary education. Assess the potential of information technology to improve access and quality while reducing cost.

National Reading Research Center

Reading: National Reading Research Center (NRRC), University of Georgia, 318 Aderhold, Athens, GA 30602-7125. (706) 542-3678. *Monitor:* The National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment

The **University of Georgia** and the **University of Maryland at College Park** in collaboration with the University of Washington, San Diego State University, the University of Texas, Clark Atlanta University, the University of Virginia, and Rutgers University **($7.7 million, 5-year agreement)**

The Center is charged with expanding the knowledge base on children's and adolescents' acquisition of reading proficiency and the use of that proficiency to learn from text. The NRRC's research embraces four major program areas: instruction, learning, assessment, and professional development. The first three program areas were identified by OERI in consultation with various constituencies and individuals interested in improving literacy. The fourth program area recognizes that successful instruction, learning, and assessment in reading must engage teachers as well as learners.

The Research Strands within each program area are:

Instruction—The 15 research projects in this program area comprise 4 interrelated strands of inquiry: literature and early reading; comprehensive and cognitive strategies; knowledge-rich contexts; and social contexts of literacy instruction.

Learning—The research projects in this program area can be divided into three strands: emergent literacy and language development; motivation for reading; and learning subject matter from text.

Assessment—The studies in this program area focus on two questions: how do alternative performance-based reading assessments compare to traditional standardized reading tests? and how do alternative performance-based assessments influence the instruction and learning of children who are having difficulty learning to read?

Professional Development—Five studies in the area of professional development, including three longitudinal studies, are being designed to test the assumption that instruction, learning, and assessment in literacy-related activities must engage the teacher as well as the student.

Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk

At Risk: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), Johns Hopkins University, CSOS, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. (410) 516-8800. *Monitor:* The National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students

Johns Hopkins University and **Howard University** in Washington, DC, in collaboration with the University of California at Santa Barbara, University of California at Los Angeles, Arizona State University, University of Chicago, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, Southwest Regional Laboratory, University of Memphis, and University of Houston, Clear Lake. **(Annual funding is approximately $5 million)**

The Center focuses on how inner city and rural schools, families and community agencies can work together to ensure that students placed at risk of educational failure achieve their full potential throughout their schooling and beyond.

Three themes underlie the work of the Center:

- Ensuring success at key points in children's development and schooling,
- Building on personal and cultural assets, and
- Scaling up successful programs.

The Center's work is organized into seven programs: Resilience and Cultural Integrity; Early Education and Development; School and Classroom Interventions—Elementary Schools; School and Classroom Interventions—Middle and High Schools; Language Minority Studies; School, Family, and Community Partnerships; and Systemic and Policy-Related Studies.

National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented

Gifted and Talented: National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC G/T), University of Connecticut, 362 Fairfield Road U-7, Storrs, CT 06269-2007. (860) 486-4676.
Monitor: The National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students

> **The University of Connecticut at Storrs** in collaboration with City College of New York, Stanford University, the University of Virginia, and Yale University **($7.4 million, 5-year agreement)**

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented is a resource for schools looking for better, more effective ways to identify and help gifted and talented students from underserved populations (e.g., students who speak limited English, have a disability or are economically disadvantaged).

In addition to the five primary members, the consortium includes 337 school districts, 52 state and territorial departments of education, and a consultant bank of 167 researchers associated with 86 universities throughout the United States and Canada. Included in the consortium are representatives from historically and predominantly black colleges and universities, from colleges and universities serving primarily Hispanic students, and from tribal colleges serving Native Americans.

The Center's research is designed to answer such basic questions as:

- What are the most effective ways of identifying, nurturing, and developing the many talents of students from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds? How can schools ensure that all students are provided with challenging learning opportunities?
- How can programs developed for gifted and talented students be used to improve the education of all students within a school?
- How can researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and others work together to design and conduct research and ensure that it informs policy and practice?

The Center will conduct research under the following seven project components:

- **University of Connecticut**—Maximizing the Effects of Professional Development Practices to Extend Gifted Education Pedagogy to Regular Education Programs;
- **City College of New York**—Applying the Triarchic Model to Ethnic Minority High School Students;
- **Stanford University**—Identifying, Teaching, & Evaluating the Talented Through Linguistic and Cultural Lenses;
- **University of Virginia**—The Feasibility of High-End Learning in the Diverse Middle School;
- **Yale University**—Modern Theories of Intelligence Applied to Assessment of Abilities, Instructional Design, and Knowledge-Based Assessment;
- **Yale University**—Giftedness and Expertise; and
- **Yale University**—Identification and Assessment of Tacit Knowledge for Youth Leaders.

Regional Educational Laboratories

The Regional Educational Laboratory Program

The Regional Educational Laboratory Program (the "Lab Program") is the U.S. Department of Education's largest research and development investment designed to help educators, policy makers, and communities improve schools and help all students attain their full potential. Administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), the network of 10 Regional Labs works to ensure that local, state and regional educational improvement efforts are informed by the best available research and knowledge from practice, and that exemplary and promising programs--and other important lessons about school reform—developed or learned in one site can be appropriately applied elsewhere.

Background

Congress initiated the Lab Program in 1965 as part of the landmark Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The Act addressed the failure of the educational system at that time to provide high-quality instruction and achieve high levels of performance by all students. The Act provided financial support for school districts and States for additional staff, educational materials and resources, and capacity building. And it created a system of Regional Labs to develop and disseminate, in cooperation with schools, state education agencies and research universities, ideas and programs for improving educational practices throughout the country. In 1965, U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel described his vision of Regional Labs in testimony to the House General Subcommittee on Education:

The proposed system of large-scale regional educational laboratories would provide the funds and the setting for the conduct of research, for the articulation of the results of research into forms that can be used in classrooms, for continuous testing of these forms, for the training of teachers in their use, and for making them available to local systems.

In 1994, the Regional Laboratory Program was reauthorized (P.L. 103-227) with the mission "to promote knowledge-based school improvement to help all students meet high standards and to help the nation meet the National Education Goals."

Regional Labs Serve Their Regions

Each Regional Lab is guided by a governing board representative of the constituencies in its region--including teachers, researchers and high-level policy makers. Under the guidance of their Boards, Laboratories:

• work with states and localities to implement broad-based comprehensive school improvement strategies through provision of information, training and technical assistance, and development or implementation of research-based programs;

• conduct development and applied research resulting in well-tested models for implementing systemic reform and for "scaling up" isolated reform efforts;

• promote widespread access to information regarding research and best practice;

• create communities of learners to promote enhanced knowledge and to engage collaboratively with the Laboratory in development and dissemination;

• cooperate with other ED-funded technical assistance providers to create a nationwide education information and assistance system capable of supporting educators' and policy makers' needs related to educational improvement; and

• forge strong links to the research community to promote the creation of new knowledge to improve the educational system.

In their work, Laboratories are expected to pay particular attention to rural areas and to districts and schools that serve high concentrations of economically disadvantaged learners.

Regional Labs Serve the Nation

The Regional Labs also work as a network, utilizing their respective knowledge, experience, and expertise to develop and deliver products and services benefiting educators nationally. Over the past five years, the Regional Laboratory Network was successful at:

• bringing together curriculum framework developers (in math and science) from 22 states to design tools to help developers in other states with similar responsibilities;

• promoting the case method as a tool to help teachers improve their skills by teaching teachers how to prepare case studies, training teachers in the use of the case method for pre-service and in-service instruction, and disseminating casebooks to thousands of educators nationwide;

• validating Laboratory-developed products and processes that have proven to be useful in improving schools and enabling other Laboratories to provide technical assistance to spread these practices nationwide; and

• helping to identify or develop resources for critical issues facing urban education and making those resources widely available to teachers on the Internet.

Priorities for the Next Five Years

Over the next five years Laboratories will be working with hundreds of schools and school districts, as well as states, research institutions and community-based organizations to explore effective ways to implement educational reforms that contribute to improved teaching and learning. Two priorities will guide all Laboratory Program work:

(1) helping educators and administrators to "put the pieces of educational improvement together" systemically to achieve educational excellence and equity for all students; and

(2) helping educators and administrators to "scale up" systemic reform to benefit schools, and the educational programs within them, in all communities.

Each Laboratory has also been asked to develop a defined area of special knowledge, competence and accomplishment as a *specialty area*. Laboratories will then be able to provide leadership and act as an expert resource both within their respective regions and to the Laboratory network. In addition, the specialty areas are aligned with dominant themes of the OERI Research Institutes and the national research centers they support to encourage strong linkage between knowledge creation and utilization efforts.

Conclusion

Thirty years after their creation, the Regional Labs continue to be vital partners with state and local educators, researchers and policy makers in using research to tackle the difficult issues in education reform. Fulfilling this mission is of critical interest to the nation, as opinion polls consistently show that the need to improve education is one of the highest priorities of the American people. And though there are no panaceas in education, the cumulative work of the Regional Labs over three decades has resulted in many well-tested programs and approaches that can make a measurable difference in educational improvement.

THE NORTHEAST AND ISLANDS LABORATORY AT BROWN UNIVERSITY (LAB)

Address: 144 Wayland Avenue
Providence, RI 02906
Phone: (401) 274-9548 Fax: (401) 421-7650
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Director: Dr. Adeline Becker (interim)

OERI Contact: Lynn Spencer (202-219-2179; lynn_spencer@ed.gov)

States Served: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

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FY 1996 Funding: $4.9 million

Mission: To promote knowledge-based school improvement throughout the Northeast and Islands region that helps create equal access to high-quality learning environments for all students, helps all students meet high standards of learning, and helps the nation achieve the vision set forth in the National Education Goals.

Partner Institutions: Brown University's Education Alliance for Equity and Excellence; Hunter College, City University of New York; Abt Associates; Bolt, Beranek and Newman; Center for Applied Linguistics; Center for Resource Management; JOBS FOR THE FUTURE; RMC Research Corp.; Super Teams; TERC; the University of Massachusetts/Boston; and the Superintendents' Leadership Council

Applied Research and Development: The role of the LAB is to provide forums to engage all stakeholders in the reform agenda for the purpose of "meeting in the middle." The LAB will work with state departments of education (SEAs), intermediate service agencies, community groups, professional associations and other organizations to assist them in building their own capacities to share and adapt exemplary strategies with local educators. The LAB will focus attention on assistance, development and applied research strategies in three "Zones of Inquiry." These Zones include: transforming teaching and learning to ensure all students learn at high levels; creating school environments that support opportunity to learn; and building partnerships that support new standards for learning. The LAB also will apply cross-cutting themes—policy, equity, professional development and leadership, and technology—to help states and local districts integrate the components of reform.

The LAB has designed its work as collaborative inquiry that brings stakeholders together, first in like-minded working groups and then across groups to share and extend perspectives, insights, and understandings around effective practices and positive environments. The LAB is "putting the pieces and people together" to build consensus and support for coherent systemic reform efforts. The LAB's approach to development and applied research takes advantage of current research tools and dissemination models and seeks to find ways of using

them to build on new understandings about practitioner-centered learning and change. In particular, every aspect of the LAB's research approach:

- helps create a collaborative research agenda that extends beyond any one institution, stakeholder group, or level in the education system;
- addresses the real and complex issues faced by educators seeking to create better learning environments for children—by bringing existing research and best practices, generating new knowledge, creating a dissemination process that grows out of the inquiry process, and helping build capacity that sustains change;
- includes school district and SEA staff as active research partners and helps both SEAs and schools become self-reflective learning organizations;
- conducts collaborative research in school settings, helps build knowledge in those setting, and connects with existing networks to expand the community involved in creating and using knowledge; and
- produces practical and useful products.

In conducting its research and development work, the LAB will impact schools directly by:

- providing teachers with more effective curricula and strategies for meeting the needs of diverse children;
- helping teachers and parents work together to support students, especially those from language minority, urban, and disadvantaged backgrounds;
- providing professional development and reflection time for teachers, principals, and superintendents so they can build consensus around specific reform initiatives;
- creating strong mechanisms--including a governing board—that will enable teachers, principals and parents to help establish LAB priorities and accountability mechanisms;
- helping parents, business and community agencies to understand and support substantive and well-directed school improvement efforts;
- creating new environments and support systems that help students learn in non-traditional settings;
- forecasting what students and teachers will need to succeed in the 21st century so that new models for teaching and learning can be adapted;
- building coherence out of policy, program and funding initiatives that are often fragmented, uni-dimensional and inimical to systemic reform;
- assessing and promoting better use of technology in the region's schools; and
- keeping communication simple, direct and jargon-free.

Specialty Area--Language and Cultural Diversity. The LAB will provide reforming schools with alternative assessment procedures for language-minority students; develop new approaches for communicating with Limited English Proficient (LEP) families to increase involvement in their children's education; use the Education Alliance's CONNECT model to develop and test programs for collaboration and improved communication between teachers of LEP students; promote more effective interventions for language-minority students; and create a better national understanding of how language-minority students and their families can become true participants in systemic reform.

MID-ATLANTIC LABORATORY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS (LSS)

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States Served: Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington, DC

1996 Funding: $4.2 million

Mission: To play a pivotal role in the revitalization and reform of education throughout the mid-Atlantic region by significantly improving the region's capacity to bring about lasting improvements in the learning of its increasingly diverse student population. The LSS will facilitate what in the past has proven to be a difficult endeavor: transforming research-based knowledge into useful tools that can be readily integrated into the educational reform process. The work of the LSS will be continuously refined based on feedback from the field on what is working and what is needed. The ultimate goal is a connected system of schools, parents, community agencies, professional groups, and higher education institutions that gradually "scales up" in the region and is part of a high-tech national system for information exchange.

Partner Institutions: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Catholic University of America, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), National Urban Coalition, Penn Hills School District (PA) and Trenton (NJ) State College.

Applied Research and Development: Guided by the mission to assist state education agencies and local schools in implementing knowledge-based systemic educational reforms that result in significant accomplishments in achieving educational resilience and learning success of all students, the interdisciplinary team of LSS researchers and collaborating field-based professionals will engage in a program of research, development, dissemination, and application that is not only practice-sensitive, but also results in products, program models, and exemplary strategies that are usable and suitable for dissemination and applications.

The LSS researchers with expertise in bilingual education, economics, educational psychology, instructional technology, public policy, sociology, and politics of education will focus on a broad-based program of research and development that aims to: (a) identify effective educational practices and policies that are currently in use; (b) develop new strategies for efficacious classroom instruction; (c) design and implement caring school environments that foster educational resilience; and (d) demonstrate the feasibility and efficacy of a coherent and coordinated system of service delivery that connects families, schools, and communities in systemic ways in the service of children and youth.

Services to the Field. The LSS Services to the Field Unit features three unique approaches. The first is the establishment of a network of Councils for Regional Extension Services (CRESs). The CRESs serve as local hubs for maintaining highly accessible information services, technical assistance, and training resources for serving improvement needs throughout the mid-Atlantic region. Four CRESs are in operation: the Washington, D.C., CRES, housed at the Catholic University of America; the Penn Hills CRES, at the Penn Hills School District in western Pennsylvania; the Trenton CRES, at Trenton State College in New Jersey; and the Cross-State CRES, at LSS headquarters at Temple University.

The second unique approach is a field services strategy that links the LSS to existing systems of dissemination and professional development resources. For example, LSS's Mid-Atlantic Network of Professional Organizations, which is coordinated by ASCD, will unite professional organizations involved in preservice and inservice professional development to further the work of the Laboratory. Relying on the infrastructure of its member organizations, the Network will serve as an outreach mechanism to reach their extensive grassroots memberships.

The third approach is the LSS's collaborative action research component, which will demonstrate and disseminate information on locally initiated reform efforts that work. Engaging front-line professionals to conduct field-based trials of research-based innovative programs is a key component of the LSS's applied research. On expected outcome of this work is an interactive process of development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination that leads to a substantial knowledge base on a variety of working strategies that bring research-based innovations to bear in efforts of the schools to significantly improve student learning.

Specialty Area—Urban Education. Integrated carefully with its other research and development work, the LSS will develop and implement an Urban Education Enhancement Program. This program of applied research and development, to be carried out in collaboration with the other Regional Educational Laboratories, will focus on building the nation's capacity for fostering educational resilience and learning success of children and youth in urban schools with concentrations of students in a variety of circumstances that place them at risk of school failure.

A key programmatic initiative under the Urban Education Enhancement Program is the Learning City Program (LCP), a broad-based, school-family-community approach to improving the educational attainment of urban youth. LCP is based on research conducted at the OERI-supported National Center on Education in the Inner Cities at Temple University. Findings to date show that students in LCP schools, compared to non-LCP schools, tend to feel positive about their classroom, school and learning environments, have higher aspirations for learning and better academic self-concepts, feel they are receiving constructive feedback from teachers about their work and behaviors, and more clearly understand the rules of behavior. Data also show a positive pattern of changes in math and reading scores, with LCP students outperforming comparison students on both subjects. Furthermore, when components of the LCP are well implemented, families and the community become increasingly active in a wide range of school activities and in the decision-making process.

APPALACHIA EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY (AEL)

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States Served: Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia

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FY 1996 Funding: $3.3 million

Mission: To link the knowledge from research with the wisdom from practice to improve teaching and learning. This is accomplished through working with educators, researchers, policymakers, business leaders, families, students, and others to discover, develop, evaluate, and disseminate innovative services, products, and practices.

Applied Research and Development: AEL involves its Board of Directors and educators across the region in identifying, planning and carrying out the work of the Laboratory. The research and development activities of AEL reflect this involvement. In each state, AEL is conducting an R&D project, jointly designed with state education leaders, to complement state reform initiatives. In Kentucky, the study looks at the development and assessment of student writing portfolios in 100 schools where scores show consistent gains in the portfolio portion of the new, performance-based statewide testing program. AEL seeks to identify factors present in these successful schools that correlate with producing strong scores and to design and test a professional development program for use with teachers statewide. In Tennessee, the AEL study is designed to increase the knowledge base concerning ways to make the Internet a part of meaningful instruction in classrooms. The project relies on the best practices of a group of exemplary teachers known to effectively integrate the Internet with instruction

The changing role of departments of education across the country—from monitoring to providing support and assistance—is the stimulus for the Virginia study. AEL and the department are working together to develop and test a system the state can use to provide school divisions with technical assistance that supports the academic achievement of all students, especially those in high-need schools. In West Virginia, the state asked for AEL assistance with two projects. In one, a relatively short-term effort, AEL will work with district- and school-level staffs to develop several models for reports that can be generated from data available on the new, statewide, computer-based education information system. The models will be designed to inform school decision making. The second project is intended to help schools meet the state board of education's directive to examine and restructure their use of time in the school day and school year. The work will develop and test strategies that increase school capacity to restructure school time to improve student performance.

In addition to these state projects, AEL will conduct other applied research and development work. A project called the Network of Inquiry Learning and QUEST (Questioning and Understanding to Enhance School Transformation) involves school personnel from across the region in development and testing of processes to help local school communities develop capacities for undertaking continuous improvement. Teacher action research also continues into the next five years and builds on AEL's 10 years of experience in the area. Working collaboratively with teacher associations and colleges and universities, AEL will sponsor and facilitate groups of practicing teachers who will investigate, using action research methods, a problem or issue significant to their individual teaching.

AEL will also support research and development studies in rural education. To participate fully in the benefits of education reform, rural schools and communities need specialized support in three areas: school readiness, academic achievement, and school-to-work opportunities. AEL will develop product and support mechanisms that enable rural schools and communities to help students enter school ready to learn, master challenging core academic subject matter and relate their schooling to successful adult roles. Finally, AEL will continue its highly acclaimed, five-year study of the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. The work is intended to analyze the effects on rural school districts of large-scale changes in state policy.

AEL provides a wide variety of research- and development-based information and assistance to educators and others across the region. A comprehensive School Services Center is accessible toll-free by telephone, or electronically through e-mail or fax. The Center provides free searches of the ERIC database, access to specialized periodicals, research syntheses, and online searchable databases of hot topic subject files, training opportunities and technical assistance providers, and state and regional directories of promising practices and programs.

Specialty Area—Rural Education: AEL will provide leadership for programmatic research and development activities that will inform efforts to improve education in rural communities. Two projects are planned. One consists of activities designed to improve school readiness of preschool children, school-to-work opportunities of secondary students, and academic achievement of all students. A novel strategy of this effort will be the formation of a national academy of rural practitioners and researchers who will engage with each other through topical listservs, National Rural Education Association symposia, and video reports. The second consists of activities designed to inform the debate about rural education. Products resulting from this effort will include an annual paper addressing emerging rural education issues, an electronic journal, and a rural education digest.

Recent Accomplishments: Established in 1966, AEL is governed by a 28-member Board of Directors whose members include representatives from the region's state departments of education, key education professionals, and non-educators interested in education. AEL has developed high-quality R&D projects and products to deliver professional development, promote family literacy, increase parental involvement and assist school districts, departments of education and decision makers. AEL's professional development program *QUILT--Questioning and Understanding to Improve Learning and Thinking*-- has gained national prominence through acceptance into the National Diffusion Network. **Family Connections**, the AEL-developed series of weekly guides for parents, is now being used in 45 states and is available to more than 60,000 families nationwide.

SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL VISION FOR EDUCATION (SERVE)

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FY 1996 Funding: $4.5 million

Mission: To improve educational opportunities for learners in the Southeast.

Applied Research and Development: SERVE's region-wide applied research and development program will build the capacity of schools and districts to assess their needs and progress toward improvement goals. The R&D program consists of six projects, all focused on engaging partner schools, districts, and states in developing products and services that recognize local responsibility for monitoring the success of educational practices. SERVE will work over time with selected districts to:

- Develop meaningful indicators of school progress;
- Pilot and refine a self-assessment process for high schools;
- Pilot new teacher evaluation approaches that support professional growth; and
- Pilot professional development opportunities for teachers to develop classroom assessment approaches that guide students toward challenging goals.

Additionally, SERVE will organize regional study groups to consider issues involved in scaling up innovative programs and practices that are taking root in the region. Study groups will look at successful programs in the areas of curriculum, school/district management, and intervention for at-risk students.

Finally, SERVE proposes to partner R&D efforts at the state level with each state in the region. In North Carolina, a study of site-based management will be written, disseminated, and discussed at a regional meeting of state department representatives. In South Carolina, in partnership with the state department of education and the national Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University, SERVE will provide resources to consider the impact of a state initiative to provide intensive assistance to identified schools. Partnered projects with the other four states in the region will follow.

Specialty Area—Early Childhood Education. SERVE will develop expertise and the ability to provide leadership and support to the early childhood community nationwide by establishing a resource and referral system. Initially staff will conduct a national needs assessment, using the Laboratory network and other sources, in order to identify critical needs. From this information, SERVE will:

- Establish a research agenda (identify research sites for data collection and development activities);
- Design, develop and disseminate interventions (products, publications, training programs, technical assistance activities, meetings and symposia); and
- Strive to influence national policy development.

Recent Accomplishments: Established in 1990, SERVE has worked closely with schools, districts, and state partners trying to be responsive to their needs in a variety of ways. Through work with these partners, SERVE supported the development of high-quality products and services, some examples of which are described below.

- SERVE collaborated with the State Department of Mississippi to develop a state-wide school board training program. Initially, training was provided to 136 school board members from 88 of Mississippi's 150 districts. During the second year of the project, over 100 school board members received training; 125 were trained in year 3. A publication highlighting the Mississippi program and describing related training efforts in the other five states was developed.

- A project with the University of South Carolina piloted a model for improving remedial and compensatory education in rural school districts. Facilitated by SERVE, a group of 12 schools (over 130 educators) wrote school improvement plans and received technical assistance over two years related to implementation. As part of the Laboratory Network Program on Alternative Assessment, SERVE disseminated *Toolkits for Professional Developers: Alternative Assessment* to over 300 users.

- SERVE developed publications and training for informing teachers about classroom assessment methods that match higher standards for students. Initially, SERVE worked with 30 middle school science teachers in 9 schools to develop a resource for teachers to use to rethink the level of work they demand from their students.

- SERVE established partnerships with 10 schools to pilot formative teacher evaluation plans, which were shared with the region through a SERVE publication. Currently, over 100 schools in the region have adopted all or part of these formative evaluation plans.

- A multi-year study to identify barriers to school restructuring efforts culminated in the publication of two nationally-recognized documents. In a related effort, SERVE supported four schools and two districts in implementing Total Quality Management. A publication chronicles the three-year effort in these sites.

SERVE has also provided an important networking function in the region through the development of SERVE-line, an electronic communication system with over 30,000 subscribers. Educators, especially teachers, have used SERVE-line to collaborate and share resources, address educational issues, and overcome the isolation experienced in many rural areas.

Another valuable research dissemination service was the Database Information Services Clearinghouse (DISC), now freely-accessible on the Internet. In responding to the 5,000 requests received to date, DISC provided educators with access to research-based information through a computerized search of the educational literature.

Finally, SERVE *Hot Topics* and *Sharing Success* publications summarized research and best practices in important program areas and were widely disseminated. Over 100,000 *Hot Topics* and 20,000 *Sharing Success* publications were disseminated.

NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY (NCREL)

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States Served: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin

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FY 1996 Funding: $5.3 million

Mission: To apply research and development to strengthen and support schools and communities in systemic change so that all students achieve standards of educational excellence. NCREL will accomplish its mission through dissemination, policy analysis, technical assistance, and by leveraging the power of partnerships and networks.

Applied Research and Development: NCREL organizes its work in five centers:

- *Teaching and Learning Center.* The heart of NCREL's body of work, this Center collects and contributes to the research and development on teaching and learning to support improved learning for all students. Working with partners from R&D networks, Center staff support the leaders of schools engaged in systemic reform and disseminate the best learning research in innovative ways.
- *Center for School and Community Development.* This Center supports schools and communities as they undertake continuous, sustainable school development to improve learning. The Center identifies and organizes research and models of best practice to help schools and communities improve their planning, decision-making, and action so that students achieve at high levels. The Center also provides technical assistance, training, and consultation to help schools and communities invest in continuous growth while meeting today's needs.
- *Center for Scaling Up.* This Center focuses seeks ways to scale up innovation and systemic reform to reach every classroom in the region. The Center works to build knowledge about how to scale up practices and programs that work, and to implement those strategies. Center activities are intended to increase understanding of the nature of reform and the factors associated with replicating promising and proven practices.
- *Evaluation and Policy Information Center.* By providing evaluation and policy analysis services to support systemic reform, this Center reflects NCREL's belief that inquiry is a vital element of the Laboratory's work. To carry out its work, the Center develops networks of researchers and research users, monitors and tracks state and local reform efforts, conducts rapid-response inquiries that inform and influence policy making on "hot" education issues, provides resources for state policy seminars and studies, and holds online policy seminars.
- *Technology for Educational Achievement Center.* Born of NCREL's belief that technology is a powerful tool for schools and communities, this Center takes the lead in examining the potentials and limitations of current and emerging technologies to promote more

effective teaching and learning. The Center also examines critical policy issues that must be addressed in applying technologies in educational settings.

Specialty Area—Educational Technology. As a leader in educational technology, NCREL will establish a national Forum on Educational Technology that will serve both as a policy "think tank" to create an extensive knowledge base in this area and as an "interface" for potential users of this knowledge base. The knowledge base created by the Forum will contain information about current and alternative policies and their consequences as well as "captured wisdom" gleaned from the experiences of state, regional and local entities as they implement technology programs and formulate technology policies. Participants of this Forum may include policy makers at all levels, educators, school and district administrators, technology developers, telecommunications providers, colleges and universities, and education agencies. Initially, the Forum will focus on five policy domains:

- Providing universal access to technology systems;
- Integrating technologies into curricula;
- Monitoring and stimulating the development of new technology innovations;
- Establishing communities of practice and partnerships; and
- Examining regulatory and management issues.

Recent Accomplishments: A leader in the study and use of technology in education, NCREL was a pioneer with the Public Broadcasting System in the use of satellite delivery of video-based professional development programming. In the past five years, NCREL produced 22 programs as part of five series, all delivered free via PBS satellite to the more than 23,000 public and private schools in NCREL's region. A three-time Telly Award winner, NCREL will continue to produce educational programming.

NCREL's most recent technology-based resource, the *Pathways to School Improvement* Internet site, is designed to help school teams in their efforts to improve education. The content of *Pathways* represents the best in research and practice from NCREL and the other nine regional educational laboratories, as well as research and development centers nationwide. Other recent accomplishments include:

- *Urban Principals Academies.* Designed to provide ongoing support and training for urban school improvement, the academies have been providing intensive leadership programs for hundreds of principals and administrators since 1992.

- *Strategic Teaching and Reading Project (STRP).* This research-based instructional improvement and professional development project provides a framework for improved teaching and learning for grades K-12. Since 1991, educators in more than 100 urban and rural schools across the Midwest have implemented strategic teaching through this project. Studies show that STRP makes a difference in how children read.

- *Timely publications on emerging issues.* NCREL's *Policy Briefs* have responded to the need for timely information on "hot topics" in education. A 1993 issue on "Charter Schools" has had a national distribution of more than 110,000 copies. In 1995, more than 20,000 copies of *Plugging In*, a publication on choosing and using educational technology, were distributed nationally.

SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY (SEDL)

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States Served: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas

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FY 1996 Funding: $4.4 million

Mission: SEDL exists to challenge, support, and enrich educational systems in providing quality education for all learners. The mission of the Laboratory is to find, share, and sustain effective solutions for the most urgent problems facing educational systems, practitioners, and decisionmakers in the southwestern United States. SEDL's particular emphasis is on ensuring educational equality for children and youth who live in poverty; who are Hispanic, African American, or other minorities; or who have mental or physical exceptionalities.

Applied Research and Development: As SEDL defines its work, *research* is knowledge generation, *development* is the application of that knowledge to build tools, and *dissemination* is putting knowledge into practice. In the process of generating knowledge, developing tools, and performing field services, SEDL continually considers how a particular issue or need relates to other parts of the system. From this viewpoint, all laboratory work must respond to expressed needs from the field for help with issues in implementing education reforms. In particular, the role of education research, development and dissemination (RD&D) is to help groups engaged in school improvement build the capacity to continually identify and address their own needs relative to the education of their children. SEDL contributes to this process by providing tested and proven strategies, tools, and products from which communities can draw. In this way, "solutions" to education reform needs can be researched and developed in partnership with people in the field, at selected levels of the system from the statehouse to the classroom. SEDL's work under the current laboratory contract is organized around the fo lowing six goals, each with one or more projects that range across the spectrum of research, development, and dissemination:

- Enhancing family and community involvement in education;
- Addressing diversity in language and culture;
- Aligning and supporting policy development;
- Making instructional systems coherent;
- Applying technologies to restructuring and learning; and
- Changing the organization and management of schooling.

Specialty Area—Language and Cultural Diversity. During the next five years, SEDL will engage in research, discussion, observation, synthesis, and networking to address issues related to the educational needs of an increasingly diverse language-minority student population. Some of the issues surrounding language and culture diversity in education include the following:

- Characteristics of schools that are particularly effective in fostering improved outcomes for students;
- Key factors and processes for building an effective teaching and learning environment;
- Effective competencies and behaviors of school staff and how to develop them;
- Native language development, preservation, instruction;
- Effective means of ensuring student access to high-quality curriculum content;
- Valid assessment methods and effects of alternative assessment procedures; and
- Ways of engaging support of parents and communities in the educational process.

SEDL will also document the development of an emerging binational school in the Southwestern Region to contribute to the knowledge base on adaptation of schooling to local contexts. Specific networking activities and forums will engage educators and policy makers in discussions to clarify issues and point to possible solutions to challenges facing Native Americans. Finally, distribution activities will help keep educators and the public informed about new knowledge, issues, and trends in the field.

Recent Accomplishments: *The Leadership for Change* Project is a series of studies carried out during the past five years to help increase understanding of the skills and characteristics needed by school leaders who attempt large-scale change, especially in programs for at-risk children, and to apply that understanding to the development of effective training materials and procedures. SEDL researchers describe school improvement as a progression of stages: getting started, maintaining momentum, and fostering a climate conducive to change. Leadership strategies in the earliest stage of school reform initiatives include learning from other schools, giving students first priority, deciding between partial and school-wide change, developing a common vision, and preparing staff for problems to come. Effective leaders learn to share leadership and to set aside time from regular school tasks and schedules so that staff can collaborate in planning and solving problems.

The Border Colloquy is an ambitious international program to develop a shared understanding of the perceptions and concerns regarding regional education issues among key policy makers and educators on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, or "La Frontera." With support from SEDL staff, education policy makers from New Mexico and Texas have worked with their counterparts in four Mexican states to create a shared vision for the education and well-being of children and youth in the border region. That partnership has resulted in the development of a unique plan of action for the improvement of educational services--including professional development and key exchanges of resources to maintain high-quality teaching and learning--for all students along the border.

MID-CONTINENT REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY (McREL)

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States Served: Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

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FY 1996 Funding: $3.4 million

Mission: To work with its clients to improve the quality of educational policy and practice through the application of the best available knowledge from research, development, and experience. Guided by a Board of Directors whose members represent regional interests and constituencies--including Chief State School Officers, state legislators, educators, and business and community members--McREL promotes knowledge-based school improvement to help all students meet high standards and to help the nation meet the National Education Goals by stimulating sustainable systemic change at the local and state levels. In carrying out its mission, McREL will assist local and state practitioners and administrators with "putting the pieces of educational reform together" and with "scaling up" systemic reform to encompass all schools, levels of educational administration, and programmatic areas across diverse educational contexts.

Applied Research and Development: McREL has proposed a comprehensive, collaborative development and applied research agenda designed to create tools and strategies to facilitate systemic reform to meet the needs of all children. The four programs of research include projects that:

- assist states and school districts in identifying and implementing standards, curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies based on needs and the research on best practice;

- identify human development and motivation factors that facilitate learning, instruction, and systemic change;

- develop strategies and tools that enhance organizations' capacity to learn; and

- add to the knowledge base about how the simultaneous influences of educational subsystems and their interactions affect systemic reform efforts.

These four research programs will be implemented in full partnership with stakeholders in each of the seven states in the region. Field sites, to be identified in each state, represent a long-term

investment by the Laboratory to create a variety of systemic reform tools, processes, and strategies to meet the needs of schools. Research plans will be created by a Regional Research Team composed of McREL staff and a researcher from each of the seven states. All research will relate to McREL's specialty area of curriculum, learning and instruction, as well as the process of school change.

McREL will also implement a broad set of field services designed to "scale up" systemic reform and provide direct assistance to collaborating state and local agencies. Similar to the Regional Research Team, a Regional Field Services Team will be established to develop a field services plan based both on the needs of each individual state and the cross-cutting needs of the region. Field service activities will include: the development of publications, technology networks, databases, and distance education networks; convening meetings and special working groups; and training, technical assistance, and information and resource dissemination. McREL will also assume a leadership role in the region to support formation of a nationwide education information and assistance system and will convene regional technical assistance providers to develop and implement a plan to share resources and services regionally and through the nationwide system. As a member of the Laboratory Network Program, McREL will plan activities that rely on the collective expertise of all the Regional Laboratories to develop and deliver products and processes that benefit the educational process.

Evaluation is an integral component of McREL's work and serves to assess the progress and impact of the Laboratory throughout the contract period. The primary goals of self-assessment are to determine which interventions are successful in improving educational processes and achieving desired student outcomes, and to assess the effectiveness of the Laboratory in fostering systemic change. In order to remain responsive to regional needs, McREL will conduct needs assessments throughout the contract period.

Specialty Area—Curriculum, Learning and Instruction: To provide national leadership in curriculum, learning, and instruction, McREL will build on its prior efforts to synthesize and align standards developed by various professional groups across the nation. The Laboratory will develop and disseminate resource materials, monitor and synthesize research literature, provide staff development sessions, sponsor conferences and workshops, present at regional and national forums, and develop partnerships with ED-funded institutions and providers nationwide.

Recent Accomplishments: McREL, a national leader in adapting and implementing content standards, has developed a model for tracking standards and benchmarks in the subject areas identified in the National Goals, including science, mathematics, history, geography, the arts, language art, and health. McREL has also been tracking the development of standards in thinking and reasoning, and has analyzed the knowledge and skills considered important for the workplace. School districts and states have been using McREL's work – which is available online through the Internet – in developing and reviewing their own standards.

WestEd

Uniting the **Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development** (FWL) and the **Southwest Regional Laboratory** (SWRL)

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Director: Dr. Dean H. Nafziger

States Served: Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah

FY 1996 Funding: $4.4 million

Mission: To challenge and enable educators to provide quality learning for all students by applying the best available knowledge from research, development and experience. In carrying out its mission, WestEd will work with clients to develop the tools, processes and materials that policy makers and practitioners need to better put the pieces of reform together and to scale up successful practice in ways that will ensure improved teaching and learning.

Applied Research and Development: WestEd is engaged in an array of initiatives spanning whole school reform, language and cultural diversity, and early intervention. *Whole Schoo! Reform* seeks to develop better methods to enable schools to transform themselves from a collection of programs into coherent, continuously improving organizations concerned with quality. It focuses on developing a school support strategy that uses assessment to change the culture of the school system, and co-developing or adapting and implementing three Johns Hopkins University school improvement models: Talent Development Schools, Success for All, and Roots and Wings. *Language and Cultural Diversity* seeks to enhance the systemic and collaborative capacity of teachers, school systems and communities to reshape school structures and culture to equitably serve our increasingly diverse students. It focuses on adaptive professional development strategies and a model support system for paraprofessionals. *Early Intervention, Care and Education* seeks to integrate the education community with other social services agencies, private organizations, community groups, and family members in planning and delivering comprehensive services for at-risk families.

Specialty Area—Assessment and Accountability. Focusing on assessment as a vehicle for whole school reform, WestEd will work with other regional laboratories to design and develop a far-reaching program of development and applied research aimed at helping schools use valid and reliable assessment tools not only to measure but to improve student performance. In providing national leadership on critical assessment and accountability issues, WestEd will focus on four key areas: whole school implementation; school-to-work transition; teacher assessment and certification; and development and use of scoring rubrics.

Recent Accomplishments: Established in 1966, both FWL and SWRL have developed high-quality R&D projects and products in school improvement processes, developed new knowledge and tools, acted as a catalyst for change, and disseminated the best available knowledge from research and experience.

- Drawing on proven practices in medicine and law, FWL has pioneered the use of cases—vivid teacher-written accounts of real classroom dilemmas—in professional development. Used to catalyze discussion and reflection in both preservice and inservice settings, the case approach is proving to be a powerful tool in bridging the gap between what teachers learn at the university and what they experience on the job. Evaluation of our math cases, for example, found not only statistically significant gains in mathematics knowledge but improved instructional practice.

- FWL's nationally acclaimed *Infant/Toddler Caregiver Training Program* teaches professional caregivers how to provide nurturing and educationally stimulating environments for their charges. Research-based videos and print materials are available in Spanish, Chinese, and English. The training covers infant/toddler social-emotional development, caregiving routines, language development, and working with parents. Eight thousand caregivers have been trained in California and the program has been disseminated across the nation.

- FWL's publication series of Policy Briefs and Updates has provided state and local policy makers with timely, research-based information helping them make sound decisions on such key educational issues as charter schools, site-based management, time and learning and school/college collaborations.

- FWL has helped linguistically diverse schools adapt the nationally-recognized *Success for All* program. Developed at Johns Hopkins, the program uses a whole school approach to ensure that all children in high-poverty schools master reading. Adapting the model for Spanish-speaking students, SWRL recorded significant gains in student performance.

NORTHWEST REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY (NWREL)

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States Served: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington

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FY 1996 Funding: $4.2 million

Mission: To improve educational results for children, youth, and adults by providing research and development assistance in delivering equitable, high-quality educational programs. NWREL provides research and development assistance to education, government, community agencies, business and labor.

Applied Research and Development: NWREL focuses on comprehensive school improvement strategies, building on its solid, long-term relationships with Northwest schools and communities. Development and applied research on four priority topics--assessment and accountability, early childhood education, rural education, and school change processes--results in resources which support comprehensive school reform and improvement strategies for local schools and communities. Development efforts are concentrated at school-community partnership sites which serve high concentrations of economically-disadvantaged children in both urban and rural areas.

Assessment and Accountability. NWREL is developing a comprehensive system for identifying, defining, managing, interpreting and reporting educational information as a cohesive set of school and community indicators, with related resources, training, and technical assistance to support implementation and maintenance.

Early Childhood Education. NWREL is developing processes and resources for schools to establish classroom environments that are developmentally and culturally appropriate for young children and communities to provide comprehensive, integrated services to children and families.

Rural Education. NWREL is developing a process and related tools to enable members of rural communities to carry out locally-driven school improvement efforts.

School Change Processes. NWREL is developing strategies and tools to enable school/district/community systems to engage in change processes that will move all students toward achieving high standards consistent with community-valued results.

Specialty Area—School Change Processes: NWREL is bringing together practitioners, policy makers, assistance providers, researchers, program leaders, and others to improve the results of school change processes--to increase focus on student learning and find common ground related to school improvement strategies. Objectives include unifying visions of what is possible for all children, youth, and young adults and helping people everywhere believe that all students can and must learn to high standards. Data and information on the status, trends, policies, and emerging results of using school change processes are being synthesized. Consolidating knowledge and mediating standards leads to increased cohesiveness in an R&D agenda related to school change processes. Increased public support for carefully-designed school improvement is sought by tracking results over the long run in schools, school districts, communities and states.

Recent Accomplishments: During the past five years, NWREL conducted 22,733 training and technical assistance activities involving 164,733 participants, ranging from one-to-one consultations to large regional conferences. During the same time, requests were filled for 63,623 copies of NWREL-developed products (curriculum materials, training handbooks, etc.) and 5,835 copies of reports and information documents. Examples of these training and technical assistance and resource dissemination activities include the following.

School Change Processes. NWREL has developed, and continues to disseminate, the nationally-validated *Onward to Excellence* (OTE) program. The 10-step, research-based school improvement process engages an entire school staff in using effective schooling research to improve student performance. Over the past 14 years, OTE has been used by over 2,000 schools throughout the United States.

Assessment. A NWREL study of effective methods of teaching students to write well, which began five years ago in three Oregon classrooms, has now resulted in training for more than 70,000 teachers in 18 states. Teachers participating in the NWREL training, **Creative Writers: Classroom Applications of Writing Assessment**, gain skills in using a six-trait analytic model for teaching writing. Evaluation results show that students improved their performance on writing exams, and they performed better than students in a control group; the impact was consistent across all ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Rural Education. NWREL work has shown that a number of incremental steps can facilitate change and improve the likelihood of success in delivering effective multi-age classroom instruction in small schools in isolated communities. This work has been the basis for NWREL development of resources and technical assistance to schools implementing multi-age instruction.

Early Childhood Education. NWREL has worked closely with schools and social service agencies to explore and develop effective practices to meet the needs of young children and their families, based primarily on two approaches: (1) enhancement of developmentally and culturally appropriate practices and (2) integration of education, health and social services. NWREL examined both research and actual practices at school-community partnership sites and has developed assistance programs that can help to effectively integrate education and social service delivery.

PACIFIC REGION EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY (PREL)

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Region Served: American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Hawaii, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau

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FY 1996 Funding: $2.4 Million

Mission: PREL will assist education, government, community agencies, businesses, and labor groups to maintain cultural literacy and improve the quality of life by helping to strengthen educational programs and processes for children, youth, and adults.

Applied Research and Development: PREL will be conducting its applied research and development (R&D) activities through a "practitioner as researcher" model that has been successfully used during the previous laboratory contract. A regionally representative "R&D Cadre" comprised of educators from public, private, and higher education function as a "leadership team" throughout all phases of the planned R&D activities. The Cadre provides invaluable insight into local contexts, cultural variance, and best methodologies to be employed. At the same time, the Cadre helps PREL bridge enormous distances to ensure isolated locations and costly travel can be overcome while conducting quality R&D.

The Cadre itself is an essential outcome of PREL's R&D agenda. The continuing development of a Pacific-based group of practitioners who understands and can conduct quality applied research and development is a major outcome. Focusing on regional and local R&D priorities is the second outcome for the program of work. PREL's Board of Directors plays an essential role in R&D priority setting, monitoring work in progress, and guiding the application of R&D findings and outcomes.

PREL's direct services to the field will build on the applied R&D program of work, helping to "leverage" resources to achieve the greatest possible impact.

Specialty Area--Language and Cultural Diversity: As one of three laboratories assigned the specialty area of "language and cultural diversity," PREL will work closely with the Laboratory at Brown University (LAB) and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) to develop a comprehensive, complementary program of research and development in this area.

PREL will be seeking to assist the three-part collaboration by leveraging its knowledge, insight, nd resources to maximize the work of the LAB and SEDL in order to advance the nation's schools and communities knowledge base and capacity to effectively address language and cultural diversity needs and issues. PREL's work in this collaborative effort will be particularly focused on the Pacific context, while also contributing to the national perspective on language and cultural diversity issues.

Recent Accomplishments: PREL begins this new five-year program of work with an impressive set of accomplishments to build upon as a result of the previous regional laboratory contract outcomes. A regional network of PREL leadership teams has been developed and is fully functioning, including the Board of Directors and R&D Cadre. Solid partnerships have allowed for access and involvement that are essential to quality, responsive work.

PREL's R&D Cadre has conducted the first Pacific-based studies in modern times. These include seminal work on school finance and facilities, access to learning opportunities, cultural learning, at-risk children and youth, school profiling, and needs sensing. All will inform work over the next five years.

PREL has directly assisted the development of access and use of technology throughout the region. A local area network (LAN) within the laboratory and Internet connectivity through the University of Hawaii are fully functioning. This technology has been used to assist Pacific departments of education to achieve connectivity for the first time. PREL has helped design, install, train, and support local area networks and Internet connections in American Samoa, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. All other departments of education are in the process of being assisted to come on line as well.

PREL annually convenes a "Pacific Education Conference" in cooperation with the region's educational community. Now in its 12th year, the conference is the largest gathering of Pacific educators with an average attendance of approximately 1,200. The three-day venue involves delegations from each entity in an average of 150 different workshops on wide ranging topics. In excess of 90% of the presentations are made by Pacific educators. Pre- and post-conference institutes allow more in-depth work in selected topics. The PREL conference has become "the" educational event in the Pacific, and it will continue over the next five years.

Regional Technology in Education Consortia

Regional Technology in Education Consortia

The U.S. Department of Education established the Regional Technology in Education Consortia (R·TECs) program in the fall of 1995 to help states, districts, schools, adult literacy centers and other educational institutions ("educational entities") use advanced technology to support improved teaching and student achievement. The R·TECs' role in educational technology is unique in two ways: their emphasis is regional, and their primary goal is to ensure that technology is used effectively to support school reform. R·TEC program strategies include professional development, technical assistance and information dissemination.

Professional development for teachers and other educators:
The R·TECs work with deans and faculties of colleges of education, state education agencies, professional associations, and accreditation agencies to improve pre-service education so that new teachers will arrive in their classrooms able to use technology successfully for sustained, challenging student learning activities that are collaborative, multidisciplinary, and relevant to real-world tasks. R·TECs, SEAs, LEAs and schools also work together to plan and implement professional development programs for in-service faculty to help them integrate technology seamlessly into the curriculum in ways most conducive to engaged learning and student achievement. Furthermore, to fulfill their mission to provide career-long professional development and support of teachers and other educators, the R·TECs are developing educational materials and distance learning opportunities.

Technical assistance:
The R·TECs assist educational entities in developing and implementing educational technology plans that draw upon existing or planned resources, and anticipate future needs and technological innovation. These comprehensive planning efforts address all aspects of integration of educational technologies into teaching and learning, e.g., equipment acquisition and maintenance, professional development, integration of technology within the curriculum, school administration, management of the educational process, and other community concerns. The R·TECs make opportunities available for states and districts to meet with each other to benefit from collective experience; the R·TECs also assist districts and schools to develop support for technology efforts from communities, businesses and parents.

Dissemination of information and resources:
The R·TECs identify and make known vital information in a variety of formats on planning for acquiring technology; on best practice, R&D solutions, and "cutting edge" applications of technology in education; and on using technology both for specific content areas and for educational administration. The Consortia seek out usages of technology that are replicable, widely applicable, and scaleable, also anticipating future capabilities, uses and needs.

The R·TECs work in a complementary and collaborative way with technical assistance providers funded by the U.S. Department of Education--such as the Comprehensive Regional Assistance Centers, the Eisenhower Regional Consortia for Mathematics and Science Education, and the Regional Educational Laboratories--and with other nationwide educational technology support efforts, such as TechCorps.

Northwest R·TEC Region

1350 LEAs
2.1 Million K-12

Current Consortium Member Organizations

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
Washington Education Service District 101
Alaska Department of Education
Idaho Department of Education
Montana Office of Public Education
Oregon Department of Education
Washington Office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Wyoming Department of Education

Emphasis:

- The activities of the consortium in each member state will be described in an annual memorandum of agreement with each SEA, which will specify priorities in topics and services in the major areas of staff development, technical assistance, and information dissemination. The activities will be coordinated with , support, and enhance existing delivery mechanisms in those areas.
- Regionwide delivery of some staff development and other services will be accomplished through the distance education system of the Pacific Star Schools Partnership and other distance delivery systems to ensure availability in rural and remote sites.
- The major current priorities of the region in the application of electronic educational technologies are the integration of technology in the K-12 curriculum, and planning and implementation of telecommunications networks in schools and districts.

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North Central R·TEC Region

3561 LEAs
7.6 Million K-12

Current Consortium Member Organizations

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
& Mathematics & Science Eisenhower Consortium
High Plains Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education, McREL
Argonne National Energy Laboratory
The Great Lakes Collaborative
Indiana University, Center for Educational Excellence
National Center for Adult Literacy
National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), at the University of Illinois
Northern Illinois University, College of Education
Technology and Innovations in Education (TIE)
Technology and Information Education Services (TIES)

Emphasis:

•Establishing a regional technology cooperative to develop voluntary provisions for reducing technology costs, suggest standards for technology related products and services, and to increase funding opportunities to obtain technology products and services.

•Providing technical assistance to state and local education agencies in cooperation with existing state technical assistance groups. The purpose of the technical assistance will be to assess current technology needs, support local planning to integrate technology into teaching and learning, and identify ways to overcome specific problems in implementing technology plans.

•Developing and providing information resources on technology applications and integration through print, computer databases, and a range of telecommunications and video options.

•Providing professional development opportunities for educators in cooperation with existing state professional development providers.

•Strengthening technology use and training in public and private teacher prep programs.

•Analyzing and developing technology perspectives to inform and support state policy and leadership decisions.

•Developing advanced technology applications and regional technology infrastructure to enlarge the range of technology products and services for schools and to improve communication between technology systems within the state and between states.

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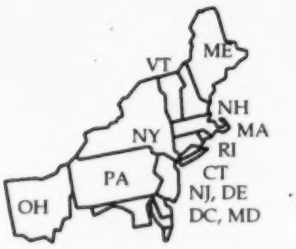
Northeast R·TEC Region



3776 LEAs
11.9 Million K-12

Current Consortium Member Organizations

City University of New York:
Research Foundation
Brown University
& the Educational Alliance
University of Maryland at College Park:
College of Education
The Ohio State University (Eisenhower National Clearinghouse Group)
Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC)
Technical Education Research Center (TERC)
Educational Testing Services, Inc.

Emphasis:

- Build upon the experiences of large, urban centers to forge links to existing educational reform initiatives by identifying significant issues, outstanding classroom practices, and innovative curriculum.
- Approach issues on a regional basis by drawing on the perspectives, ideas and experiences of state-based agencies that influence policy, planning, and implementation.
- Develop a repository and dissemination capability for:
  - mathematics, science, humanities, and social science curricula
  - content connections
  - applications documentation
  - action research
  - teachers' and children's stories
  - online resources (i.e. hypermedia, network, and WWW)

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Southeast & Islands R·TEC Region

1664 LEAs
11.6 Million K-12

Virgin Islands
& Puerto Rico

Current Consortium Member Organizations

South Eastern Regional Vision for Education, Inc.
Regional Educational Laboratories (REL):
- SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education
- Appalachian Educational Laboratory
- Southwestern Educational Development Laboratory

Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Consortia (REL-based)
Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands - Andover, MA
Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)
National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL)
University of Central Florida:
Instructional Technology Resource Center

Emphasis:
- Builds upon SERVE's successful implementation of SERVE-line, expanding both the scope of this work and the audience using the service.
- Established a HelpLine/Referral system, making personal assistance available to our customers six days a week, twelve hours a day.
- Strong linkages with higher education agencies in the region, enhancing both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

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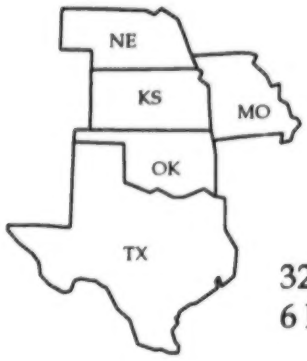
South Central R·TEC Region



3268 LEAs
6 Million K-12

Current Consortium Member Organizations

University of Kansas: Center for Research on Learning, School of Education
Texas A&M University - College Station: College of Education
University of Oklahoma - Norman: College of Education
University of Missouri-Columbia: College of Education
University of Nebraska-Lincoln: Teachers College
Kansas State Board of Education

Emphasis:

•University driven. All of the partners, except one (the Kansas SEA), are schoolsof education in major universities which have strong professional development schools. The partners will collaborate with other colleges and universities in their states, thus leveraging existing training resources throughout the region.

•Strong representation of special education resources. The project is affiliated with the Center for Research on Learning in the Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas. Though services to students with special needs was not featured as an area of focus in the application, it is a strength of the South Central Consortium.

•History of development of web-based tools. Interdisciplinary research and development teams consisting of educators, computer scientists, and computer engineers have collaborated for almost a decade in the development of tools for organization, storage, and retrieval of instructional resources on the Internet.

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Pacific/Southwest R·TEC Region

1565 LEAs
8.3 Million K-12

Current Consortium Member Organizations

California State University at Long Beach: Center for Language Minority Education and Research
ARC Associates
National Diffusion Network
California State Facilitator
TEAMS Distance Learning
TeleLearning InfoSource (TELIS) Foundation
ASSET
LINCT Coalition
CompuMentor
The Education Coalition (TEC)
California Software Clearinghouse

Emphasis:

• Integration of technology to support high quality multilingual, multicultural education in perhaps the most linguistically, ethnically, and racially diverse R·TEC region. This focus also includes special attention to technology integration which provides access to low-income and rural communities and recognizes the importance of these communities as "producers" of resources (not just consumers of others' resources).

•We focus on the community-wide nature of school reform and technology integration and access. Thus, we have a special focus on strategies to include the participation of diverse parents, community-based organizations, and community access networks. We will also work more intensely with 15 "empowerment communities" over the five year period to provide access to equipment and training to traditionally underserved students and families.

•We focus on multi-layered strategies for technology access and integration which include developing sound technology integration plans, recruiting and placing technology volunteers, developing teacher collaborative inquiry groups through mentoring and training, working with colleges of education, working on technology solutions for administrators and principals, working with parents and community members, and working with state education agencies to foster local reform efforts and regional cooperation with a focus on diversity, equity, and access.

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